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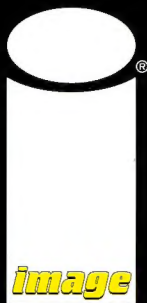
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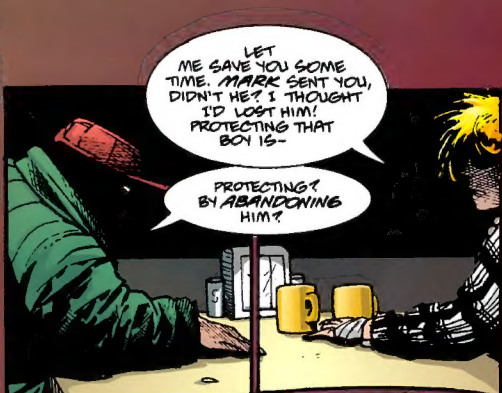


LISTEN, JULIE. THANKS FOR MEETING ME HERE.

NO PROBLEM, "DAVE." THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE STILL CALLING YOURSELF, ISN'T IT?

LOOK, JUST-- DON'T START! YOU THINK I WANTED TO... COME HERE...

FINE. WHATEVER.



LET ME SAVE YOU SOME TIME. MARK SENT YOU, DIDN'T HE? I THOUGHT I'D LOST HIM! PROTECTING THAT BOY IS--

PROTECTING? BY ABANDONING HIM?



LOOK AT MY HAND...

...NOT VERY PRETTY, IS IT?

BUT THE PROTECTION OF A MOTHER'S YOUNG NEVER IS. IF I HADN'T GIVEN THEM TO THAT "THING," MARK WOULD ALREADY BE DEAD NOW.



LISTEN, MAXX...

UH... ACTUALLY, THAT'S DA--

SHUT UP! WHEN YOU GIVE UP PART OF YOURSELF TO SAVE YOUR SON, LOSE EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE YOU EVER CARED ABOUT, AND WIND UP LIVING ON THE STREETS TO BOOT, YOU DON'T NEED A GABMED DAVE.

SO IF I WANNA CALL YOU MAXX FOR THE NEXT TWENTY MINUTES, I THINK YOU CAN INDULGE ME...OK?

UH... SURE.

SO TELL ME, WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE MY OUTBACK, "MAXX"?



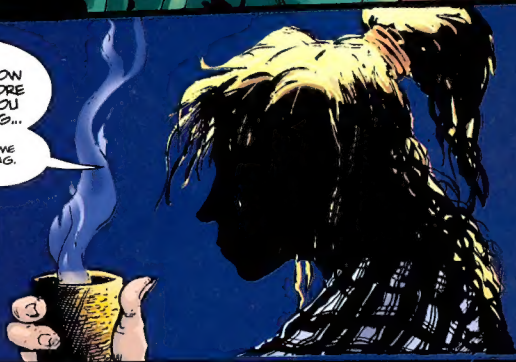
UH...

JESUS,  
I DON'T KNOW  
WHICH IS MORE  
PATHETIC, YOU  
PRETENDING...

...OR ME  
ASKING.

I JUST  
CAN'T...  
REALLY  
REMEM...

SORRY,  
DAVE, IT'S  
JUST BEEN  
KINDA UGLY  
LATELY.



YOU'RE  
NOT THE FIRST  
PERSON TO ASSUME  
I'VE BEEN NEGLECTING  
MARK. I CAN SEE  
HOW YOU  
MIGHT...

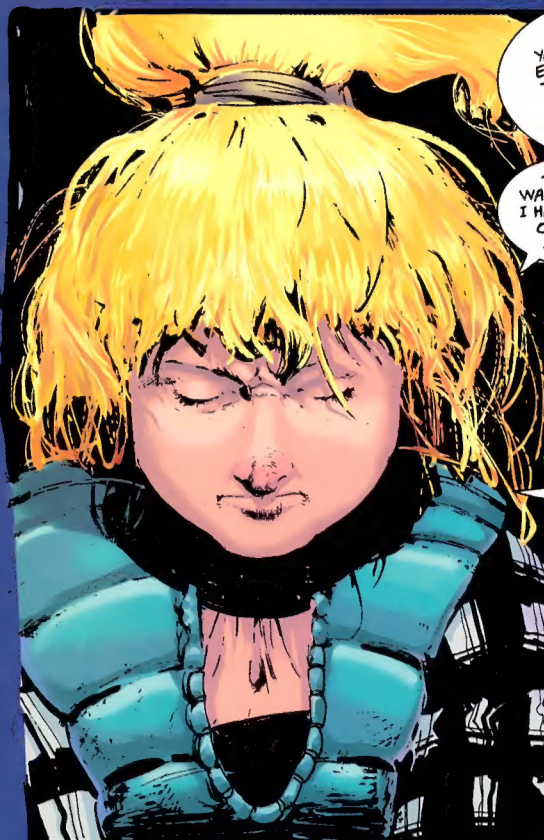
ANYWAY,  
LONG AGO, SOMEONE  
ELSE DID THE SAME.  
CPS ALMOST TOOK HIM  
AWAY BECAUSE OF HER. I  
THOUGHT I COULD TRUST  
HER. BUT PEOPLE ARE  
ALL THE SAME.

NOT  
ALL PEOPLE.  
I'M HERE, FOR  
WHAT IT'S  
WORTH.

BUT  
YOU'RE THE LAST  
PERSON I WANT TO  
SEE. MARK'S SUPPOSED  
TO USE YOU OR GONE FOR  
A PLACE TO CRASH - NOT  
TO TRACK ME DOWN. IF  
THAT "THING" KNOWS  
I'M ALIVE, AND MARKS  
WITH ME...








YEAH.  
I SEE WHAT  
YOU MEAN. SO, YOU  
EVER CONFRONT  
THAT WOMAN WHO  
TRIED TO HAVE  
MARK TAKEN  
FROM YOU?

THERE  
WAS NO TIME.  
I HAD TO GET  
OUT, AND  
FAST!

YA KNOW,  
I DON'T DOUBT  
THE SINCERITY OF  
YOUR INSTINCT TO  
PROTECT YOUR SON...  
IT'S JUST THAT RUNNING  
AWAY FROM WHATEVER  
THREATENS TO TAKE  
HIM... WHETHER IT BE  
A "STRANGE LADY"  
YEARS AGO, OR A "BIG  
YELLOW THING" NOW,  
IT JUST SEEMS...

GUTLESS?

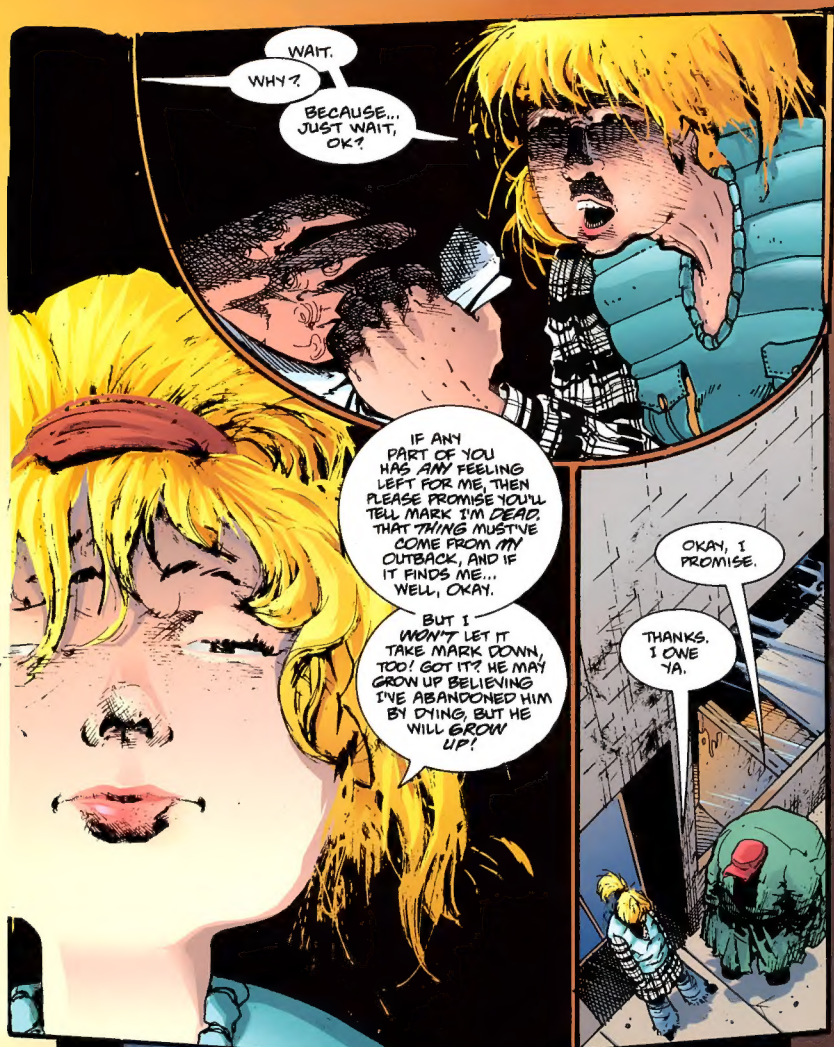
EXHAUSTING!  
MAYBE WITH  
SOME HELP YOU  
COULD TURN AND  
FIGHT FOR A  
CHANGE?  
MAYBE-



YEAH,  
RIGHT, LIKE  
YOU CARE! TEN  
YEARS OF NOTHIN',  
AND NOW YOU DECIDE  
TO COME BACK? BUT  
IT'S TOO LATE! TO ME,  
YOU'RE JUST SOME  
STRANGER  
WHO LOOKS LIKE  
MAXX.

THAT'S  
NOT FAIR. I HAD  
TO TAKE MY OLD LIFE  
BACK. AND YOU DON'T  
NEED A PROTECTOR  
ANYMORE, YOU NEED A  
FRIEND. IF YOU WEREN'T  
SO STUBBORN, YOU'D  
SEE THAT.

HEY,  
I DON'T  
NEED THIS-



WAIT.

WHY?

BECAUSE...  
JUST WAIT,  
OK?

IF ANY  
PART OF YOU  
HAS ANY FEELING  
LEFT FOR ME, THEN  
PLEASE PROMISE YOU'LL  
TELL MARK I'M DEAD.  
THAT THING MUSTVE  
COME FROM MY  
OUTBACK, AND IF  
IT FINDS ME...  
WELL, OKAY.

BUT I  
WON'T LET IT  
TAKE MARK DOWN,  
TOO! GOT IT? HE MAY  
GROW UP BELIEVING  
I'VE ABANDONED HIM  
BY DYING, BUT HE  
WILL GROW  
UP!

OKAY, I  
PROMISE.

THANKS.  
I OWE  
YA.

I ASSUME  
YOU'LL BE IN  
THE SAME PLACE,  
IF I NEED  
TO.

UH-HUH.  
SEE  
YA.

MAN, WHERE'S NORBERT?  
I TOLD HIM TO MEET ME HERE.  
OH, WELL, BACK TO DAD'S  
STORY...





AFTER ALL I REMEMBERED ABOUT HER ABUSE, I STILL MISSED AUNT RUTH.

GO FIGURE. REDEMPTION IS A FUNNY THING.

ONCE I HEARD A GUY CALL INTO A RADIO TALK-SHOW, TELLING OF HIS BEING ABUSED.

THE RADIO GAVE A HOT-LINE TO CALL.

BUT I COULDN'T.

CLICK

I WOUND UP GOING TO A SHELTER FOR WOMEN ESCAPING ABUSE. IRONIC, CONSIDERING HOW MANY I PUT THERE.

BECAUSE FEMALE ABUSE OF CHILDREN IS SO RARE, THEY DOUBTED MY STORY. I CAN'T BLAME THEM, THOUGH TO THEM I'M PART OF THE PROBLEM! I ASKED...

SO WHERE DO MEN WHO WERE ABUSED GO TO GET HELP?

A WOMAN WHO ALSO VOLUNTEERED THERE, OVERHEARD AND STOPPED ME ON THE WAY OUT. SHE TURNED OUT TO BE...

...GAYNOR! I INSTANTLY CONNECTED WITH HER. WE MUST'VE TALKED TILL TWO IN THE MORNING. SHE USED TO DATE A MOB BOSS, AND SHE WAS PROBABLY THE ONLY WOMAN WHO'D SEEN MORE GRISLY STUFF THAN ME. SHE WAS ALSO SYMPATHETIC TO ME WITHOUT WANTING TO "FIX" ME.

WE SAW A LOT OF EACH OTHER, AND MY PLUMBING HAD PRETTY MUCH "GIVEN OUT." AND SHE WAS OKAY WITH THAT. SO WAS I, SINCE I WAS SICK OF PAPER BAGS.

BUT THERE WAS STILL EMOTIONAL STUFF. AND ME AND GAYNOR WORKED ON AS MUCH AS WE COULD.

WHEN I TOLD GAYNOR  
EVERYTHING I'D DONE  
AND BEEN THROUGH, I  
EXPECTED HER TO LEAVE.  
SHE DIDN'T. I WAS  
TESTING HER.

I GUESS AFTER  
LIVING WITH A  
GANGSTER, SHE  
DIDN'T SCARE  
EASILY.



THE CLOSER I'D GET  
TO HER, THE MORE I'D  
WANTED TO SLIP BACK  
INTO MY "OLD PATTERNS."

I REMEM-  
BER THE  
LAST TIME  
I TRIED.



I HOPED I COULD JUST  
CRAWL BACK INTO PUNISH-  
IN AUNT RUTH.



BUT THE  
ODDEST  
THING  
HAPPENED.



ONE MOMENT  
I WAS STARING  
AT HER  
ANGUISHED  
FACE... THEN  
I SAW...



...MYSELF.



BEING  
ABUSED,  
ALL OVER  
AGAIN,  
BY...



...ME.



I LET HER GO,  
STILL  
ING... WITH  
MY  
REALI-  
ZATION.



ALL THOSE  
YEARS, ALL  
THOSE WOMEN  
I'VE BEEN  
TRYING TO  
HURT.



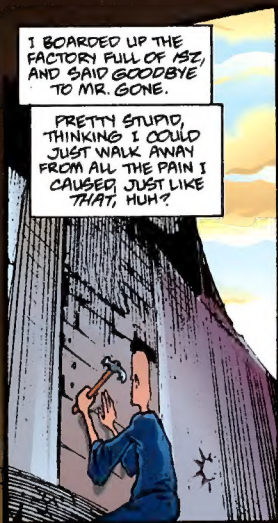
SO ONE  
NIGHT I  
WANDERED  
INTO AN  
ALLEY, AND  
FOUND...



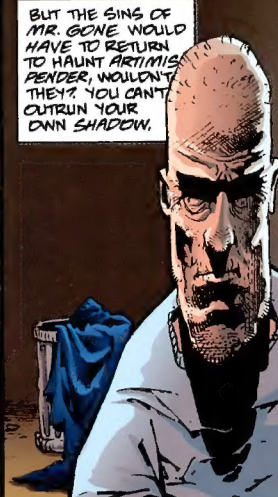
...REDEMPTION  
STARING  
BACK AT ME.

I BOARDED UP THE  
FACTORY FULL OF 132,  
AND SAID GOODBYE  
TO MR. GONE.

PRETTY STUPID,  
THINKING I COULD  
JUST WALK AWAY  
FROM ALL THE PAIN I  
CAUSED, JUST LIKE  
THAT, HUH?



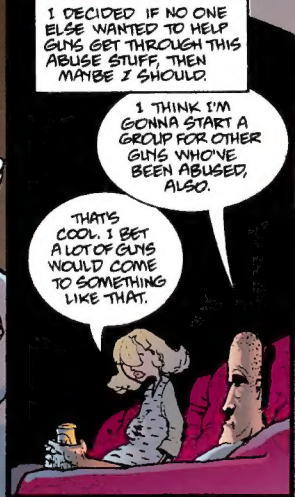
BUT THE SINS OF  
MR. GONE WOULD  
HAVE TO RETURN  
TO HAUNT ARTIMIS  
PENDER, WOULDN'T  
THEY? YOU CAN'T  
OUTRUN YOUR  
OWN SHADOW.



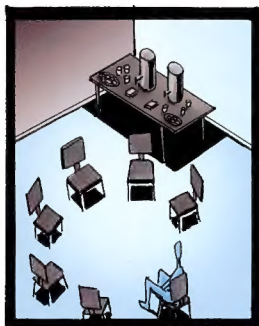
I DECIDED IF NO ONE  
ELSE WANTED TO HELP  
GUYS GET THROUGH THIS  
ABUSE STUFF, THEN  
MAYBE I SHOULD.

I THINK I'M  
GONNA START A  
GROUP FOR OTHER  
GUYS WHO'VE  
BEEN ABUSED,  
ALSO.

THAT'S  
COOL. I BET  
A LOT OF GUYS  
WOULD COME  
TO SOMETHING  
LIKE THAT.







SO I WAS WRONG, AT LEAST ONE GUY STARTED COMING. WE EXCHANGED STORIES.



HE WAS ABUSED BY HIS UNCLE, OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS.



MORE GUNS CAME, AND LIKE ME, MOST BELIEVED IT WAS EITHER "NO BIG DEAL," OR THAT THEY "BROUGHT THE ABUSE ON THEMSELVES."



I FOUND OUT I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO "WATCHED PATTERNS" OR BECAME ILL AT THE THOUGHT OF "MAKING LOVE." THERE WERE SO MANY OF US, IT WAS ALMOST A CLICHE.



BUT MY INABILITY TO TRUST ANYONE WASN'T A CLICHE. IT WAS A FACT. AND I STILL SAW AUNT RUTH'S FACE IN EVERY WOMAN I LOOK AT.

NO WONDER I FEAR THEM.

LOATH THEM...

...NEED THEM.

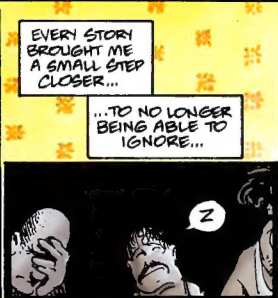


BUT I DIDN'T CARE ANYMORE.

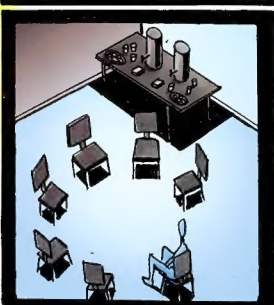
EVERY STORY BROUGHT ME A SMALL STEP CLOSER...

...TO NO LONGER BEING ABLE TO IGNORE...

...MY OWN PERSONAL BULLSHIT.

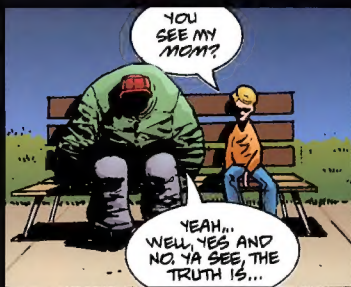


AFTER ALL I'D BEEN THROUGH, I STILL REFUSED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RAPING THOSE WOMEN.



IT WAS STILL "ALL AUNT RUTH'S FAULT."



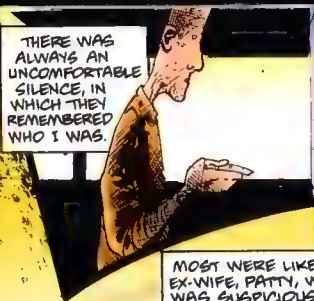




HER NAME WAS GLORIE, I BELIEVE. SHE MUST'VE BEEN A TEEN-AGER WHEN I CORNERED HER IN THAT LAUNDRO-MAT. SHE LOOKS IN HER MID-TWENTIES NOW. I WAS IN THE PROCESS OF CONTACTING ALL OF MY FORMER VICTIMS, ASKING FOR ABSOLUTION.



THERE WAS ALWAYS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE, IN WHICH THEY REMEMBERED WHO I WAS.



GLORIE JUST LOOKED AT ME BLANKLY.



I GAVE HER MY NUMBER. IF SHE EVER WANTED TO SAY ANYTHING TO ME... TO YELL, OR, ANYTHING.

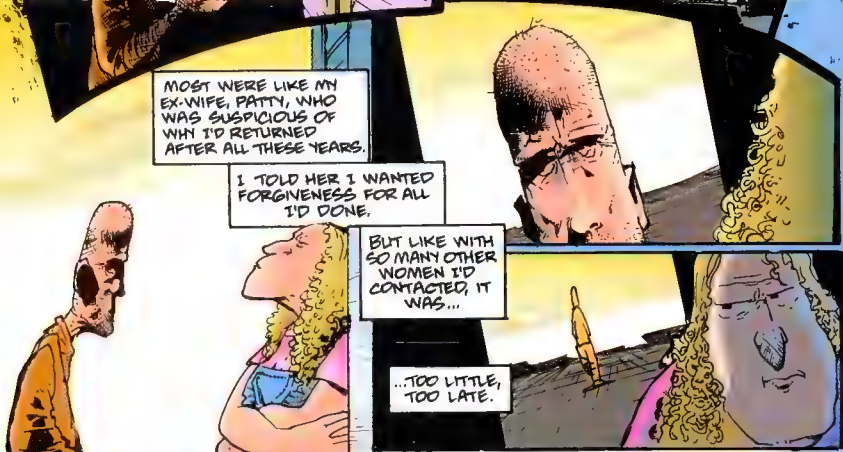
SHE JUST TOOK IT AND CLOSED THE DOOR.

MOST WERE LIKE MY EX-WIFE, PATTY, WHO WAS SUSPICIOUS OF WHY I'D RETURNED AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

I TOLD HER I WANTED FORGIVENESS FOR ALL I'D DONE.

BUT LIKE WITH SO MANY OTHER WOMEN I'D CONTACTED, IT WAS...

...TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.



A FEW MONTHS LATER, I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE...

...GLORIE. SHE ASKED IF I REALLY WANTED TO HEAR WHAT SHE HAD TO SAY? I SAID... SURE.

SHE LET ME HAVE IT. TEN YEARS OF RAGE LOOKED DOWN INSIDE.



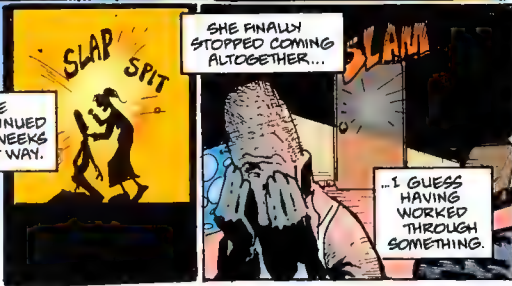
THERE WAS NO WAY TO GET IT OUT IN ONE SITTING. SO SHE'D COME OVER, YELL AT ME, THEN WE'D BREAK FOR LUNCH, SAYING NOTHING, THEN SHE'D START UP AGAIN.

WE CONTINUED FOR WEEKS THAT WAY.

SHE FINALLY STOPPED COMING ALTOGETHER...

SLAM

...I GUESS HAVING WORKED THROUGH SOMETHING.



WITH GAYNOR, I  
GOT INTO THE IDEA  
OF "WOMAN AS  
HEALER."

IT WAS VERY ROMANTIC  
TO THINK THAT ONLY SHE  
COULD BE "LOVER/  
THERAPIST" ENOUGH  
TO SAVE ME.

BUT SHE DIDN'T  
WANT THE JOB. SHE  
SAID SHE HAD HER  
OWN PROBLEMS  
WITHOUT SOLVING  
MINE. SHE WANTED  
A FRIEND.

GAYNOR HAD A TICKLING  
FETISH. SHE NEEDED  
FEATHERS. AT LEAST HERS  
WAS A POLITICALLY CORRECT  
FETISH. NO ONE GOT HURT.

I HAD A  
BREAKDOWN  
AND REALIZED  
THAT NO ONE  
HAD TO BE HURT...

...TO MAKE  
LOVE.

I SUDDENLY  
SAW MYSELF  
FLOATING.

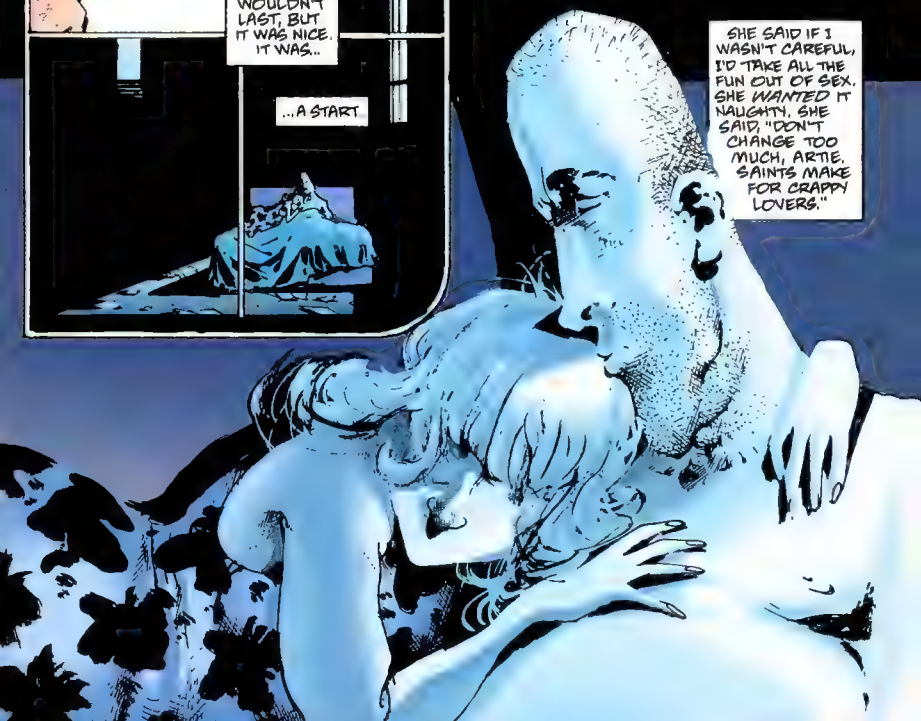
FLOATING  
AWAY FROM  
EVERYTHING  
I THOUGHT  
I WAS.

I KNEW IT  
WOULDN'T  
LAST, BUT  
IT WAS NICE.  
IT WAS...

...A START

I TOLD GAYNOR  
I USED TO HAVE  
SICK PERVERSIONS,  
BUT NOW I ONLY  
WANTED TO MAKE  
LOVE NATURALLY.

SHE SAID IF I  
WASN'T CAREFUL,  
I'D TAKE ALL THE  
FUN OUT OF SEX.  
SHE WANTED IT  
NAUGHTY. SHE  
SAID, "DON'T  
CHANGE TOO  
MUCH, ARTIE.  
SAINTS MAKE  
FOR CRAPPY  
LOVERS."





YEARS LATER, I RETIRED FROM COUNSELING AND MOVED INTO A TRAILER WITH GAYNOR. I DID SOME CHECKING AND FOUND OUT MANY OF THE WOMEN I'D ATTACKED...

...HAD BEEN ABUSED AS CHILDREN. I'D VISITED THE OUTBACKS OF THE ADULTS WHO'D ABUSED THEM.

YEARS LATER, WHEN GLORIE SHOWED UP AGAIN, I REALIZED WHY SHE'D HIT ME SO HARD.

I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE CHOSE ME TO TELL. OR WHY I CAME TO TELL HER THINGS I'VE NEVER TOLD ANY WOMAN. NOT EVEN GAYNOR.

IT WASN'T JUST ME SHE WAS HITTING BACK.

YOU KNOW, I THINK ABOUT HIM SOMETIMES, MY DAD.

I KNOW... SAME WITH AUNT RUTH.

I WISH HE WERE HERE RIGHT NOW. I'D PRETEND HE WAS THE SIZE OF THIS WORM.

YEAH? WHAT WOULD YOU DO?


OUCH- THAT'S GOTTA HURT.

NOT HALF AS MUCH AS WHAT HE PUT ME THROUGH.

AMEN.

TOO BAD IT'S JUST PRETEND, HUH?

YEAH. TOO BAD.



SHE WHAT?  
SHE CAN'T BE  
DEAD.

I DON'T  
BELIEVE  
YOU!

NEITHER  
DO I. THE  
JULIE WINTERS  
I KNOW WO-

BUTT  
OUT, PENCIL  
NECK! THIS IS  
BETWEEN ME  
AND THE KID!

LOOK,  
LET ME SAVE  
YOU THE SPEECH.  
MOM PUT YOU UP  
TO THIS, HUH? SHE'S  
GOT SOME STUPID THING  
GOING ABOUT A BIG  
YELLOW MONSTER  
THAT SHE'S GOT  
TO PROTECT ME  
FROM!

ONLY  
IT'S JUST ANOTHER  
EXCUSE TO DITCH  
ME. SHE ALWAYS  
FINDS SOME REASON  
TO TAKE OFF! LITTLE  
BLUE MEN, THIS, THAT,  
WHATEVER! SAME  
OLD CRAZY MOM!!  
WHY COULDN'T  
I HAVE A NORM--

HEY! SHE'S  
TRYING TO PROTECT  
YOU, MARK! YOU  
MAY THINK SHE'S  
TOUCHED--

-BUT  
SOMETHING  
MADE HER SCARED  
ENOUGH TO SEND  
YOU TO US.



YEAH,  
SURE. THE  
FACT SHE'S  
NUTS.

HANG  
IN THERE,  
BUDDY. YOU'LL SEE,  
SO GONE, WHERE'D  
YOU SAY WERE GOING,  
AND WHY THE  
RUSH?

YOU,  
"DAVE," ARE THE  
LEAST IMPORTANT PART  
OF THE EQUATION,  
CONSIDERING YOUR  
LINK WITH JULIE'S BEEN  
BROKEN AND I OWE  
YOU NO EXPLANATION  
OF WHERE WE'RE  
GOING?.

PISSEY  
LITTLE GUY,  
AIN'T  
HE?

HOWEVER,  
I WILL TELL MARK.  
WHATEVER YOU MAY  
THINK OF YOUR MOTHER,  
YOUNG FELLOW, SHE  
ISN'T CRAZY.

NOT  
COMPLETELY,  
ANYWAY.

THERE  
HAS BEEN SOME-  
THING WHICH IS  
KILLING PEOPLE AROUND  
TOWN! AND YOUR MOTHER  
IS ON THE LIST! WE  
HAVE TO GET TO HER  
BEFORE IT DOES!

BUT  
WE NEED  
HELP.

BIG TIME!  
THERE'S ONLY ONE  
PERSON WITH  
ENOUGH POWER  
TO HELP US RIGHT  
NOW--

WHO?

LET'S SEE. GETTING  
BACK TO OUR LITTLE  
STORY, OF DADDY  
TURNING INTO A SWELL  
GUY WHO JUST HAPPENED  
TO RAPE WOMEN AND  
TURN MEN INTO BUGS...

OKAY, SO MAYBE  
I HAVEN'T BEEN  
COMPLETELY HONEST.

NOT  
THAT I'VE  
CONSCIOUSLY LIED  
OR ANYTHING,  
IT'S JUST...WELL,  
MY STORY HAS  
BENT OVER  
BACKWARDS TO  
SHOW...



WELL,  
WHO'S NOT  
GOING TO  
HAVE SYMPATHY  
FOR AN  
ABUSED  
CHILD,  
RIGHT?



HERE'S  
MY PROBLEM.  
A LOT OF PEOPLE  
ARE ABUSED AS  
KIDS! IT DOESN'T  
GIVE THEM THE  
RIGHT TO GO OUT  
AND... AND,  
WELL...



...DO  
WHAT I  
DID.



ON A  
PHILOSOPHIC  
LEVEL, I AM  
REPUSED BY WHAT  
I'VE DONE, OR EVEN  
IF A VICIOUS  
THOUGHT POPS INTO  
MY MIND I'M  
SICKENED TO  
VOMITTING.  
HONEST.



BUT,  
PHYSICALLY, IT  
FEELS SOOO GOOD!  
ESPECIALLY WHEN  
I'M NOT SUPPOSED  
TO DO IT! PURE  
ANIMAL LUST!  
MALE OR FEMALE!  
IT'S GREAT,  
ISN'T IT?



SOMETIMES,  
I'M SURE A  
DARK PART OF  
MYSELF, CAPABLE  
OF HURTING OTHERS,  
IS THE ONLY HONEST  
PART LEFT. MY  
DARK, SHADOWED  
SELF!



WHEN!  
IT TAKES  
A LOT OUT  
OF YOU.  
:sigh:



BUT  
MY DESTRUCTIVE  
SHADOW IS FULL  
OF BULL, TOO.  
IT HAS ITS  
DARK "AX TO  
GRIND."



I GUESS  
I'LL JUST HAVE  
TO ACCEPT  
BOTH GOOD  
AND EVIL AS  
PART OF MY  
COLLECTIVE  
FAMILY.



BUT,  
WAIT-IT'S  
NOT  
WORKING!

I'M  
GETTING  
SUUCKED  
INTO THE  
SHADOW!

HEEEU...





SEE!!!  
YOU CAN'T  
ASSIMILATE THE  
EVIL! THERE'LL ALWAYS  
BE A DARK PART OF MY  
SOUL WHERE WOMEN  
ARE ~~\*\*\*~~! ~~\*\*\*~~ AND  
LITTLE KIDS ARE JUST  
ASKING FOR IT!  
ESPECIALLY  
ME!



NOW I'M  
EVEN SCARING  
MYSELF! WHAT  
KIND OF A **MONSTER**  
WOULD THINK  
A CHILD CAPABLE  
OF CARNAL  
THOUGHTS!

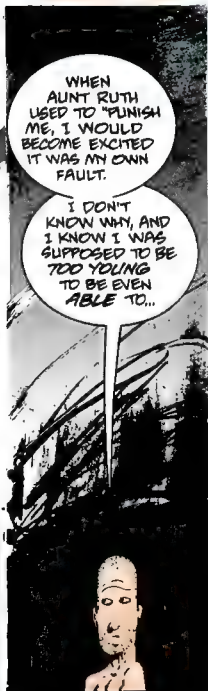


THE  
KIND THAT  
CAN'T  
FORGIVE  
HIMSELF.



WHEN  
AUNT RUTH  
USED TO "PUNISH  
ME, I WOULD  
BECOME EXCITED  
IT WAS MY OWN  
FAULT.

I DON'T  
KNOW WHY, AND  
I KNOW I WAS  
SUPPOSED TO BE  
TOO YOUNG  
TO BE EVEN  
ABLE TO...



...BUT I  
DID. I'M SO  
ASHAMED, I  
COULD DIE. I  
CAN FORGIVE  
MYSELF,  
NOW.

BUT  
I JUST  
CAN'T FORGIVE  
...THAT LITTLE  
BOY I  
WAS.



I KNOW.  
I KNOW.  
UNLESS I FORGIVE  
THAT BOY, I'LL  
NEVER BE  
REDEEMED.



BECAUSE  
I'M THAT BOY!  
GET IT?  
I'M HIM!  
IRONIC,  
HUH?



JUST REMEMBER  
SARA, REDEMPTION  
IS NOT FOR WHIMPS.

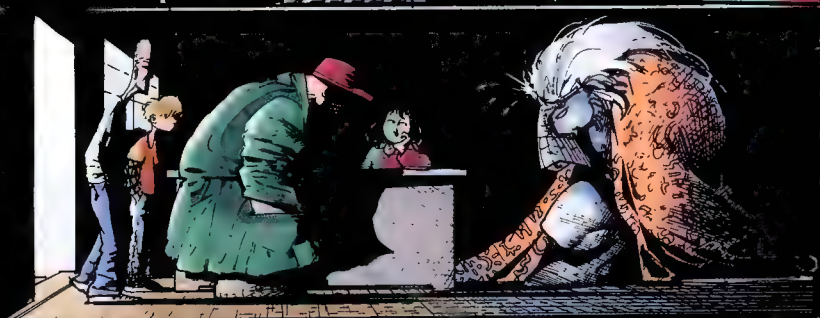
GEEZ,  
NORBERT,  
WHERE WERE  
YOU?

SORRY,  
THE YELLOW  
PAINT I USED ON  
MY MASK KEEPS  
FADING.

WHAT  
DOES "REDEMP-  
TION FOR WHIMPS"  
MEAN?

NEVER  
MIND. I GOT A  
MESSAGE THAT GONE  
WANTED US TO MEET  
HIM HERE. IN FACT,  
HE SHOULD BE..

click



I CAN'T BELIEVE I USED TO DRESS  
LIKE THIS GUY.

SARA,  
THIS IS MARK  
WINTERS. HIS  
MOTHER SENT  
HIM HERE FOR  
HELP IN STOPPING  
IAGO.

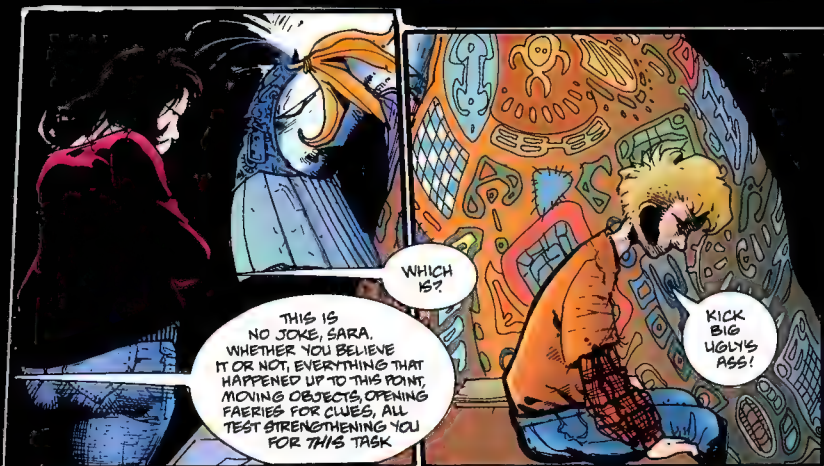
WHAT  
EE-AUG-OH  
?

HI,  
MARK,  
HELLO,  
MAXX.

HI.

NOT  
YOU,  
STUPID.

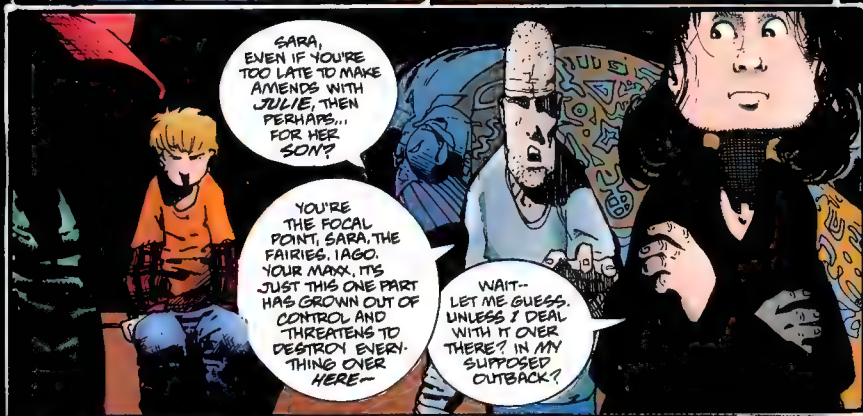




WHICH IS?

THIS IS NO JOKE, SARA. WHETHER YOU BELIEVE IT OR NOT, EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED UP TO THIS POINT, MOVING OBJECTS, OPENING FAIRIES FOR CLUES, ALL TEST STRENGTHENING YOU FOR THIS TASK

KICK BIG UGLY'S ASS!



SARA, EVEN IF YOU'RE TOO LATE TO MAKE AMENDS WITH JULIE, THEN PERHAPS... FOR HER SON?

YOU'RE THE FOCAL POINT, SARA, THE FAIRIES, I AGO. YOUR MAX, ITS JUST THIS ONE PART HAS GROWN OUT OF CONTROL AND THREATENS TO DESTROY EVERYTHING OVER HERE--

WAIT-- LET ME GUESS. UNLESS I DEAL WITH IT OVER THERE? IN MY SUPPOSED OUTBACK?



FORGET IT. WHO NEEDS HER? I KNOW THIS SARA'S THE ONE--

--WHO TRIED TO HAVE ME TAKEN FROM MOM WHEN I WAS LITTLE.

BESIDES, ITS TOO LATE. MOM'S DEAD.



WELL, ACTUALLY... NO, SHE'S NOT.

I KNEW IT!  
I COULD FEEL  
SHE WAS ALIV-  
OH, GREAT-THERE  
GOES MY HAND  
AGAIN.

SORRY,  
MARK, BUT  
SHE WAS TRYING TO  
PROTECT  
YOU.

OKAY,  
SO LET'S  
GO GET MOM  
AND STOP  
THIS  
THING!

AT THIS POINT,  
I DON'T HAVE  
A CLUE HOW  
TO STOP  
HIM.

I DO,  
MARK, I  
PROMISE--

YEAH,  
YEAH,  
BLAH-BLAH-  
BL-

LISTEN,  
YOU LITTLE SQUIRT!  
EVERYONE ELSE MAY  
HAVE LET YOU DOWN, BUT  
NOT ME! DESPITE WHAT  
YOU THINK, I CALLED THE  
AUTHORITIES BECAUSE  
I CARE FOR YOU-AND  
YOUR MOM. AND, UNLIKE  
HER, I DON'T MAKE  
PROMISES I CAN'T  
KEEP.

I'LL  
SAVE  
HER.



IT'S  
COMING FOR  
ME. AS I KNEW  
IT WOULD AT LEAST  
MARK WILL BE  
SPARED. DAVE WILL  
WATCH HIM. I KNEW  
THERE WAS SOME  
"MAXX" LEFT IN  
DAVE.

FUNNY,  
I THOUGHT  
I'D BE MORE  
FRIGHTENED,  
NOW THAT  
I'M ABOUT  
TO... TO...

NOT TIME TO DIE YET!  
HERE'S A THOUGHT.  
TIME TO RETURN TO  
DREAMTIME! BE  
SWEET JULIE.

WHOOOSH!

ARE  
YOU SURE  
THIS IS  
THE PLACE,  
MAXX?

THAT,  
DAVE, AND  
YES, SHE SAID  
TO MEET HER  
HERE!



OKAY, GUYS,  
STAND BACK-THIS  
COULD GET UGLY!  
THIS IS BETWEEN  
A GIRL AND HER  
SLUG!

WE'RE  
TOO LATE!  
HE'S GOT  
HER!

I DON'T  
THINK SO, MARK.  
IF I AGO HAD  
KILLED JULIE,  
HE'D JUST WAIT  
FOR US TO GET  
HERE.

I THINK  
HE TOOK HER  
SOMEWHERE  
TO GOAD  
US INTO  
FOLLOWING...

YEAH,  
BUT THE  
QUESTION  
IS...

...WHERE?







Dear Sam,

I was thrilled to find out that a Maxx action figure was hitting the market. But, alas, the fruits of my labor were not. I couldn't find the damned thing anywhere. Then a gentleman at a local comic store informed me of its limited availability. What the hell is that about?

John Paanenen  
Jamaica Plain, MA

**Yep, they're limited, all right (like us). It's time for creative solutions, like the following:**

Dear Sam,

I am writing to help out all those frustrated Maxx fans who can't find the action figure. For months I was just as upset about the lack of Maxx toys in my local toy and comic shops. Then I went on the Internet. There are hundreds of collectors just waiting to sell their Maxx action figures (or just about anything else you can think of). Anyway, now I've got my own plastic Maxx, and I'm happy as a clam.

Another loyal Maxxhead,  
Joe Daily  
Bala Cynwyd, PA

# **SOME FOLKS HAD MILD QUIBBLES ABOUT JULIE DYING:**

Sam you idiot,

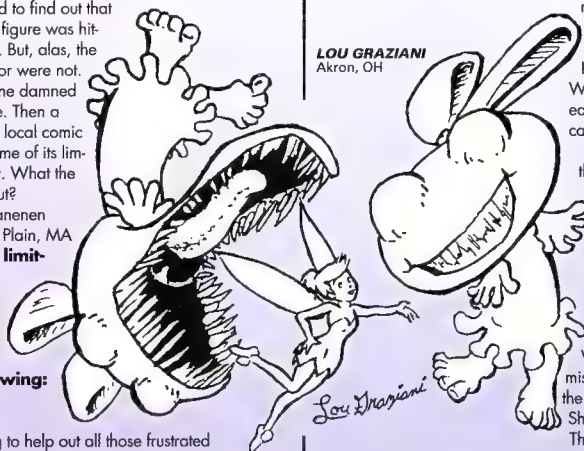
What the #%@\*\*\*& are you  
**Ooops—better not print that one...**

Dear Sam "out of control" Kieth,

I picked up ish 25 w/a feeling of confidence. For the first time I was one step ahead of you; I had you all figured out! Sara and Maxx were going to save Julie and Steve while working out their emotional problems, somehow. So I read through it real fast (looking for Julie). Too fast, evidently, because I didn't really see the names of the dead people. Then Sara crumpled and threw

down the list. I went back to see what could cause such a

**LOU GRAZIANI**  
Akron, OH



reaction...MY GOLLY GOSH...YOU KILLED OFF JULIE!!

Wow...never expected that. Oh well, can't quit now.

More of a slave than a reader,  
Ray Girouard  
Berwick, ME

Dear Sam Kieth,  
Ahem. YOU KILLED JULIE?! What the HELL WERE YOU THINKING?!..... Wait. I get it. It's a mistake, right? It's not the same Julie Winters. She's different, right? This is just some clever

ploy to confuse us yet again, isn't it?

Sincerely,  
Emily Horenian  
Dedham, MA

Dear Sam (if that is your real name),

I've never written to an author before. In fact, I rarely write letters at all. You will therefore appreciate the gravity of the situation necessary to force me to write (and send) a letter. I'm sure that I'm not alone in saying "YOU CAN'T KILL JULIE! I WON'T LET YOU!!!" Other than that, I love the current story line.

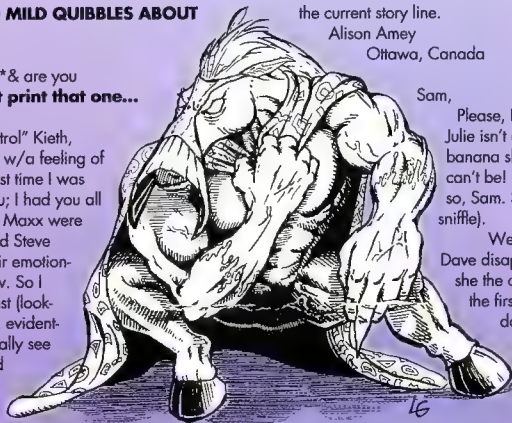
Alison Amey  
Ottawa, Canada

Sam,

Please, Please, PLEASE! Tell me Julie isn't dead! Tell me that big banana slug didn't kill her. It can't be! It just can't! Say it ain't so, Sam. Say it ain't so (sniffle, sniffle).

Well, if Julie is dead, would Dave disappear eventually? Isn't she the only reason he exists in the first place? If not, where do you think you might take this? (Besides, Mark needs somebody to take care of him.)

Erica Gaspard  
Orange, TX



**LOU GRAZIANI**, Akron, OH

Dear Sam,

Is Julie really dead or is this another of those things where you just make everyone think someone's dead when they're not? Like maybe Iago almost killed her but he only got her hand so, like, we'll see her in a couple of issues going around with a hook or a fork or something for a hand? Or maybe there's another person with the same name? Or for once could someone REALLY be dead? I wanna know.

Talia Felix  
Santa Fe, NM

Dear Sam,

What's up with the fingerprint? Am I to believe Julie Winters is dead? I hope not. I wanted to see what she looked like ten years later. Plus, I think Iago's a sissy. A real killer banana slug would murder its victims itself. Evidently, Iago stole Vincent Vega's corpse after Butch Coolidge shot him. Killer slug my foot! Keep up the good work.

Shields Barrett  
Hudson, OH

**As you now know, of course she isn't dead. And she wasn't dead before I got these letters, even. Honest.**

Sam,

How come the truth didn't seem to help Julie? I mean, after all she went through, her life was still messed up. What's the deal?

Peace, love, and granola,  
Chris Curran  
Toledo, OH

**Hey—Julie's Outback may be healing inside, but that doesn't mean she's gonna stop bitching outside (I know I haven't...)**

**W/all this carping about Julie, what about Gone?**

Dear Sam,

You asked about Gone's possibly not being an evil fellow after all. So here are my thoughts: It seems to me that one of the cool premises of The Maxx is that reality depends on the perceiver. The fact that everybody has a different Outback, for example. Another part of this is how, in some ways, the Outback is more real than the city.

So Gone did do all those horrible things, and Artie Pender did not. And yet they are the same. There is no need to explain it more than that, I think.

Rachel English  
Bellingham, WA

Dear Sam,

I can believe that Artie Pender is

an okay guy and Sara is being paranoid about him, but Mr. Gone was a total bastard and should remain so. But I think I see a way out of this... Artie was telling the complete truth. Mr. Gone was a mental projection of his; he was a tulpa.

Tulpas are, like, external projections of personality from the soul, based on Indian legends. They appear to be real people to everyone else, but they're really created by several weeks of hard thinking about what sort of person you want to make, after which you have your own little helper.

The catch in all of this is that no matter how good and selfless you make your tulpa, they have a nasty habit of changing to reflect the less savory aspects of your nature, or even the subconscious fears of others. And the longer you leave them, the more independence they gain. So leave a tulpa alone for a month or two, and you end up with the original Monsters From the ID scenario.

Cheers,  
Will Sargent  
San Francisco, CA

**These letters came in after Issue 25. I wonder what these folks (and you) think after reading this ish!**

TO: The Creative Team Behind The MAXX,

Is there a collected volume of The Maxx? I am not a "collector" in the sense that I pile comics up in hopes of making money; I collect to read and enjoy. My local shop has all the back issues but the prices are too steep. The greasy fanboy at my local shop won't help me—he just tries to sell me Spawn and X-Men.

Thank you from a new Mxhd,  
Zachary Trover  
Billings, MT

**Yes—there is a Mx TPB (trade paperback) that includes issues 1-6. AND, an issue 7-12 TPB is due out soon, plus we'll keep collecting and**





**releasing them that way. Or try Head-to-Head—I notice a lot of folks want to dump their old Maxxes CHEEP.**

Dear Sam,

I had this great idea: a Maxx chess game! Here are the figures I have:

**WHITE:**

Pawns- White isz  
Rook- Leopard Queen's fortress  
Bishop- Sara  
Knight- Maxx  
Queen- Leopard Queen  
King- Julie

**BLACK:**

Pawns- Black isz  
Rook- An Air Whale  
Bishop- Dican  
Knight- Emwitabway or  
Re'Qark'n  
Queen- Mr. Gone

Keep me wanting more,  
Alex Campos  
Houston, TX

**Cool.**

Sam,

I've never written to a comic before. I once stalked Howie Mandel but that's another story. After reading ish 5 I had to write. Frankly, I've become fed up with those who trash Norbert. I like him even more than Dave. Ow! I guess I shouldn't say that around these parts. Mayhaps it's because I'm a Horse on the Chinese calendar. Or it's possible that I adore Norbert because he has such style. Case in point: a mask made of old garbage and banana peels instead of feathers. What panache. It brings a tear to this Bone Gnawer's eyes. And the quilt as a cape. I thought I was the only person who did that. I am not alone anymore! (And the guys at the supermarket laughed...)

Which brings me to another thing. Norbert definitely knows how to shop. I would have used the squirt guns for different purposes however. And the shot of Norbert hunched over dissected fairies while clutching a butter knife in the kitchen. I wish I could have that much fun. Usually I just chuck burritos at my dogs. Although I can't remember my score at the moment.

So there you have it. Someone totally satisfied with the "new" Maxx. Okay, maybe totally was the wrong word. Where are the bellbottoms? And when will we see Maxx inside Sara's Outback?

Yours falsely,  
The Smiling Burrito  
Aztec, NM

**Burritos at your dogs?**

Dear Sam,

Sorry to disappoint both Austin and Phillip, but my son Wesley is your youngest fan! He got into Maxx when he was two years old (he's 3 now)! He loves both the comics and the cartoons,

as do his mother and father!

Daddy, Mommy  
& Baby Maxxheads,  
Darin, Sheryl & Wesley Bagley  
Bloomington, IN

**Maxx fans of all ages are cool of course, but ish 26-27 are deliberately written**

**to go over the heads of little kids, who shouldn't have to worry about such things. Older readers**

**KATHERINE FREEMAN**  
San Jose, CA

**need to keep that in mind when sharing these issues.**

Sam and Co.,

The recent Maxx issues (the ones I've been able to find!) have only been getting better, and Friends of Maxx was especially good, because it felt more like a really good short story with pictures than a comic.

Mike Ceconi  
Little Falls, NY

**Thanks! Friends of Maxx #2 (Broadminded) will be out in November. Check it out.**

Salutations,

I'm not writing this letter to comment on your fine book this time but to thank you so very much for your Head-to-Head column. Because of this service you do for us fans, I have met a few friends I wouldn't have met otherwise, and one incredibly special woman in particular.

Her name is Jeanette and she wrote to me from an ad I placed in the penpals section, and we wrote for a while, then began talking on the phone.

We met for the first time after like six months or so at the San Diego Comic Con this year. Jeanette is a wonderful woman, gorgeous, fun to be with and I love her. I think she feels the same, and while she lives several states away, we are currently talking about moving closer to each other to get to know each other better on an everyday basis.

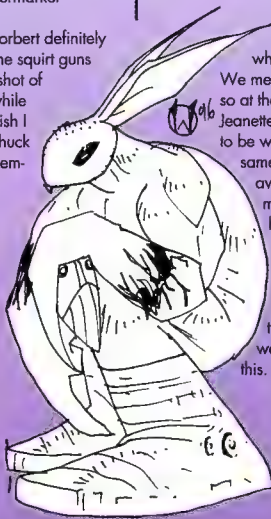
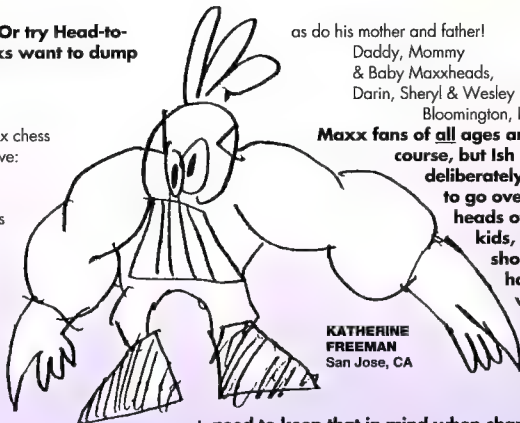
If it weren't for your book and there being a Head-to-Head, I probably would never have met her (or any of the other friends I made), and I just wanted to thank everyone involved for this.

Thanks.

Sincerely,  
R.J. Spassov  
Bolivar, OH

**Great, because Head-to-Head was meant to hook up folks just like you say. Thanks for letting us know about your**

**MICAH WIGGINS, Englewood, FL**



success!! And good luck.

You may have noticed that last month we made a big deal about penpal people using post office boxes or e-mail instead of personal addresses and phone numbers, but this month we printed penpals with personal addresses. Why? Because we piled up a buncha penpal submissions, all of which would have to be resubmitted etc. etc. So we're putting the pobox thing off an issue. But we're serious: **NEXT ISSUE (#28), penpals will have to use e-mail or POBox numbers.**

Sam Kieth,

The Maxx is great. But let me just say one thing to most of the people who write into Maxx Traxx. All I've been reading in Maxx Traxx is about how bad your life is and how troubled you are. That kind of talk is all too typical nowadays and I'm getting sick of it. Yes, I'm sure your life is sooo much like the storyline, but that's a kind of comparison anyone can make. How 'bout a few letters w/something good to say.

Tony

Worcester, MA

Dear Sam,

The Maxx is great, somehow touching something inside so that I feel kind of exposed after reading an issue. It's as though something's revealed inside of me. I guess that must be how it feels to be psychoanalyzed.

The letters pages are great too. It's nice to see that you don't mind printing what people write about their feelings instead of just what they think of your artwork.

I just reread a whole bunch of back issues and it made me pause for thought. My life hasn't exactly been conventional so far, and a lot of people down the road have called me weird just cause I was a little different.

There were times when I kind of liked the idea and revelled in my weirdness. I told everyone that I was, and didn't object if they labelled me as such. (I notice a lot of Mxhds do the same.) After a while it starts to wear you

down though. After a while you've built such a wall between you and so-called normal people that you can't escape. What started as fun becomes a pigeon hole you can't climb out of.

Each of us strives to live the life we want to, to be the people we are inside; but there is also a need in every one of us to be liked and loved. I always feel as though I'm selling out if I try to fit in by consciously subduing my individuality, and I am, in a way. Sometimes though, you need to ask yourself how much you need love and respect in order to be happy. I don't think forming ever-growing bands of self-proclaimed weirdos is the answer in the end.

I don't call myself weird anymore, and I don't let others tell me I am, but I still try to live the way I always have. Only the name has changed. Now I'm an undercover weird agent. (Course you're probably thinking, "Who is this weirdo?")

I'd like to know what you guys think.

Tim Garton

Windmill Hill Farm

Stoulton, Worcestershire, England

Dear Sam,

I really love The Maxx. When I watched the show on MTV, I felt it was like me and my sister (The Maxx and Julie). My sister and I both have a co-dependent relationship, but my sister left me to go to college (like in the Oddities version on MTV). And I was stubborn like The Maxx. Didn't say much. After that, I had to find out



MAXX

MEETS THE

how life was

after she left. It was really hard. Especially since I was getting stomach-aches all the time.

But I survived. Now I have to

move to California with my Dad and leave Illinois. So I guess it's my turn to go to my Outback (California).

Thanxx,  
Jeff Stahler

Illinois

**Sounds like a helluva year. But you survived, as have others before you, even in California! Read on.**

Dear Sam,

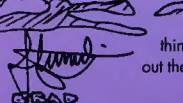
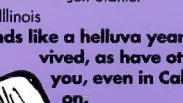
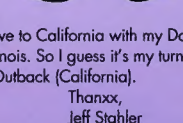
In case this letter actually gets printed (yeah, right), I

want to say some-

thing to all the Mxhds out there that have writ-



**BRAD STAMULIS**  
St Louis, MO



with being "losers" and "misfits." Just hang in there guys, it does get better. I was a "geek" throughout middle and high school because I got good grades and was overweight and like Star Trek, D&D, computers (insert your favorite "uncool" hobby here). I didn't have many friends at all and got beat up a lot (mentally and emotionally more than physically). I kept trying to be cool and act cool, without realizing that being "cool" is being yourself, no matter how "weird" or "demented" that is. When I had just about resigned myself to being a geek forever, I started making friends. Friends that were just like me. The fact that someone could actually like me did more for my self-esteem than any amount of self-pity. When I was with my friends, I could be myself, and I liked that. And so did they.

Now I'm in college and I have a loving group of friends, both from college and back home who take me for what I am. So, what I'm trying to say is: watch Star Wars, read The Maxx, and quote Monty Python in social situations, and play Magic, and whatever else it is that you do that people laugh at, and ENJOY IT. You're probably having a lot more fun doing it than they are making fun of it. Things will get better. Not right away, of course, but soon enough.

Meep.  
Ron L.  
New York, NY

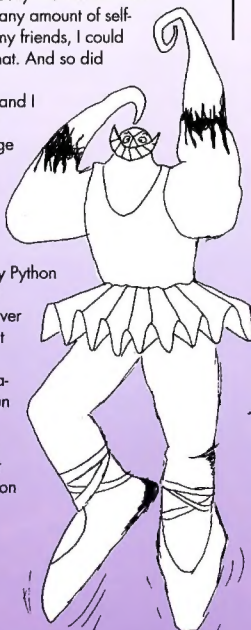
**Well said.**

### Sara got some action. (Letter-wise.)

O godlike Sam,

Back in ish 21, you asked what Sara should be in her adult Outback. I'm sure you've already considered this, but wouldn't the obvious choice be a...um...well...a fairy? Think about it. First, the connection to the exploding fairies: if Sara were the "fairy princess" in the Outback, the exploding fairies would be, like, her servants, or something. Second, Sara gets all angry and closed-minded whenever Norbert mentions the fairies, just like when he tries to tell her about her glowing-hand power...if she didn't want to admit to having power, she wouldn't want to admit to being a fairy, either. Third, everyone knows that fairies are really cold, cranky, and aloof, just like good ol' Sara. Fourth, Sara would look pretty darn sexy as a fairy!

Born in Santa Cruz/therefore most likely related to lago,  
Tristan Pirtle  
Murfreesboro, TN



Dear Sam,

Could you make Sara a TINY bit nicer to look at? I mean, I know she's no glamor gal, but even the bums in your books manage a little "Sam Kieth Artistic Coolness." The Charlie-Brown-Receding-Hairline-Surprised/Mortified look is good for effect, but I think you've been falling back on it a little too often, lately.

Your enduring fan,  
Benjamin L. Ponsford  
Nampa, ID

**Uh-oh. He' cum da letters. He' cum da letters.**

Dear Sam,

I started reading your book a couple months ago, buying it (I admit) mainly because I saw the show on MTV during an evening of captive channel surfing and thought it kicked serious ass. I see it as a true representation of society—more so, at least, than

the typical comics you find—those that show woman either as perfect heroines or helpless victims of some dark force. It could easily make the comic book world kind of intimidating to a 16-year-old chick. How am I supposed to be entertained by this beautiful cyberbabe with perfect legs sav-



BRY GUY  
San Jose, CA

*[Signature]*  
-96-

ing the world with her breasts while I'm roaming Atlanta analyzing why someone dumped me or debating where my next piercing should go? You see what I'm saying? It's difficult to relate to many comic books—I can appreciate the art, but I can't get emotionally involved.

With The Maxx, though, it's different. I feel like the red-haired Julie Winters, and not just because both our wardrobes consist mostly of bell-bottom jeans and tank tops. We have many similar experiences and buried fears in common. I identify with Julie's manic need to be independent, Sara's loneliness and isolation from "normal" people, and Maxx's feeling of, well, amnesia. Also, I don't think many people see this, but it seems to me that Gone has become a sort of vision of humanity, in that he is evil one moment, then a few comics later, he's Artie, the senile bum who uses talking bait.

May whatever is out there smile upon you,  
Cat Odum  
Lilburn, GA

**Can I vote on where your next piercing should go?**

Dear Mr. Kieth and all Maxx fans,

Sara's new look is great! She's more beautiful than ever, and her new hairdo is perfect! Her cap w/ the goggles and her—GASP!—skirts are great, too. And that glowing hand! WOW! A piece of advice for Steve (and boy, I bet his Outback is wild):



get out of the house once a month, man, or yer DEAD! Anyway, Sara's great, and I think I'm beginning to like her more than Julia now that she's more grown up. My God! Is that possible? Yes, it is.

Why has there been so much hate mail in Maxx Traxx from fools complaining about the new changes in the Maxx lately? To me, the change is great! Troy Hill complains that the new Maxx isn't like the old one. Well, DUH! I do believe that's because this is Sara's Maxx, not Julia's? Besides, Horse Maxx has been with Sara since she was five years old, so of course her Maxx isn't going to be exactly like the old one. They are different spirit animals, after all! I think you should stop living in the past, Mr. Hill, and embrace the here and now.

What? Oh, Lordy, he's complaining about the exploding fairies not being like the Isz, too? I don't know about anyone else, but I LOVE those little pink guys! They're a real hoot! And cute as a button, too! The way they float up into the air and burst when they become dry (or don't get fed regularly)...HA!! And besides, as much as I like them, I feel that the whole black-and-white-Isz thing has run its course for now. And I think it's very cool to see a different version of the Isz, anyway. It makes me wonder what they'll look like in Mark Winters' Outback—and if you don't show us what his Outback looks like **REAL SOON**, Mr. Kieth, I'm going to...

Anyway, at least a six-foot horse isn't as strange as a six-foot rabbit—and Iago and his crew are, at least in my opinion, better villains than Mr. Gone. Don't get me wrong, I like him, but I just don't think he's "supervillain" material. His present status suits him **PERFECTLY**! He is now the thing he was meant to be. Anyone else agree, or am I just a grain of sand in a sea of people?

Regards,  
Timothy Stark  
Walterboro, SC

**OK, NOW,  
THIS TIME  
FOR SURE!**

**NO MORE HOME  
ADDRESSES/PHONES  
NUMBERS FOR HEAD-  
TO-HEAD PENPALS**

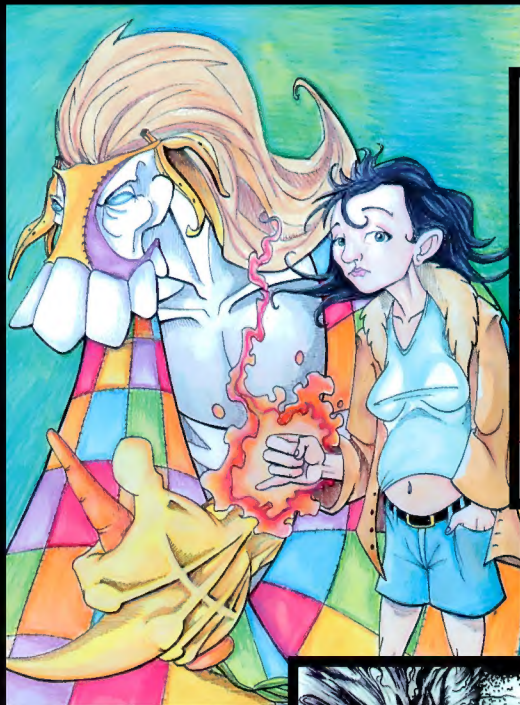
**(OK for other sections of  
Head to Head, but we do  
recommend PO Boxes for  
everyone). Use E-mail or  
Post Office Boxes. (This  
applies to everyone who  
sent in a Penpal ad after September 1. If**

**yours doesn't appear this month, and you  
sent it in around September 1 or after,  
please re-submit it, along with an e-mail or  
pobox number.)**

**PS/HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS WE GET ASKED  
ALL THE TIME: No subscriptions or retail  
sales available/sorry. Use "Head to Head"  
to find back issues/fan clubs/whatever (use  
the address in the indicia)/postcards are  
cheap and easy like us/WRITE LEGIBLY. No  
we don't print all the letters or art we  
get/too many/yes we do read them  
ALL/you might get answered or printed or  
edited/you might not/life's funny that way.  
B&w art has better chance of being pub-  
lished than color/can't return  
artwork/sorry. Keep 'em coming/the bet-  
ter the letters and submissions, the better  
the book! Oh yeah.**

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